

**Middle East Notes**  
**Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns**  
**June 16, 2016**



*Please note: Opinions expressed in the following articles do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.*

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The six featured articles and the many related links in this issue of the Middle East Notes highlight: a recommendation of a newly published book, *Never Can I Write of Damascus*, which paints a uniquely picture of daily life in the heritage-rich country of Syria in the period before and just after the 2011 eruption of unrest there; a statement from the father of Khaled Mahamra, one of the two terrorists responsible for the shooting attack June 8 in Tel Aviv; the dim future for a Palestinian State due to domestic failures and Israeli intransigence; a Israeli satiric article on world silence to oppression of the Palestinians; concern that Israel is moving from a right-wing to a fascist government; the catastrophic policy for Israel of an open-ended, ever-deepening military occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip; a testimony of FMEP President Matthew Duss to the Democratic Platform Committee on Israel/Palestine; and other articles of interest.

**Commentary:** This issue of the Middle East Notes highlights the connection between hate crimes as in Orlando, Florida, electioneering exclusionary programs in the U.S, and the drift in Israel away from representative democracy towards fascism. The occupation of the West Bank, blockade of Gaza, Israeli land acquisition in East Jerusalem, and restrictions on Palestinian citizens of Israel all are indicative of exclusionary policies of exclusion, control, and the marginalization of the millions of Palestinians living between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River – perhaps half of the total population. Israel, with two legal systems – a democratic one for Israelis and a military one for Palestinians, is in fact already a bi-national State with full democratic rights and responsibilities available only to Israelis. Rejection by Israeli leadership of any realistic two-state solution is now fueling a growing momentum for “one person, one vote” in this de-facto bi-national state among the Palestinians, Arab and European nations, and an ever increasing number of young Jews and peace/justice Christians in the U.S. An exclusionary democracy in Israel, the U.S., or anywhere in the world remains an oxymoronic contradiction and pernicious peril.

- Father Jack Sullivan, MM, a volunteer with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, reviews *Never Can I Write of Damascus*, by Thesera Kubasak and Gabe Huck and published by Just World Books.
- Shlomi Eldar writes in that the father of Tel Aviv attacker Khaled Mahmara told Al-Monitor that he did not know ahead about the intentions of his son, who was expected to return to Jordan this summer and obtain his engineering diploma.
- Dalia Hatuqa reports in Foundation for Middle East Peace that amid domestic failures and Israeli intransigence, Palestinians see dim future for a State of their own.
- B. Michael writes a satiric article in Haaretz noting that if the indifferent world persists in its silence on the results of oppression of the Palestinians by Israeli leadership, it will prove that it really is anti -Semitic, exactly as we've always been told.
- James Zogby in an article in the *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* asks if Israel is moving from a right-wing to a fascist government.
- Lara Friedman of Americans for Peace Now on the occasion of the 49<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Six Day War writes that the day of true celebration has not yet come since it also marked the beginning of Israel’s catastrophic policy of open-ended, ever-deepening military occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip.
- Foundation for Middle East Peace provides the prepared testimony of FMEP President Matthew Duss to the Democratic Platform Committee on Israel/Palestine.

1) [Book: \*Never Can I Write of Damascus: When Syria Became Our Home\*, Theresa Kubasak and Gabe Huck, Just World Books.](#)

*“Never Can I Write of Damascus paints a uniquely picture of daily life in the heritage-rich country of Syria in the period before and just after the 2011 eruption of unrest there. It gives readers sobering information about the heavy human toll, for Iraqis, of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. The book contains stunning photos, charming hand-drawn maps, and other rich supplemental content.”*

Father Jack Sullivan, a friend of the authors and volunteer with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, writes the following review:

*“The Damascus and Syria that were and will never be again; the Iraq that was before being destroyed by sanctions and U.S. invasion; the Iraqi refugee students presently pursuing their education in the U.S. thanks to their Iraqi Student Project, all come to life in the pages and photos of this memoir. Theresa and Gabe invite us to be part of their seven year presence among the people of Damascus: Syrians, Iraqi and Palestinian refugees. They write as “inside people” struggling to learn and speak Arabic, living as neighbors in four different Damascus neighborhoods, learning how to listen, teach and even cook among Syrians and Iraqi refugees. These pages are full of personal, intimate and transparent reflections as they listened to and learned from the people who shared their lives, pain and hopes. Theresa and Gabe offer their readers a vicarious opportunity of being there with them as they laugh, cry, create and hope. Historical and other captivating “side bars” give a very useful and intriguing context to their words. Join them in the Damascus that was and the Syria and Iraq that are still involved in and emerging from chaos.”*

2) [Father of Tel Aviv attacker: If I had the chance, I'd ask Khaled why he did it, Shlomi Eldar Al-Monitor June 9, 2016](#)

*“The father of Khaled Mahamra, one of the two terrorists responsible for the shooting attack June 8 in Tel Aviv, can’t understand how his son was able to hide his plans. Khaled was a student at the Faculty of Engineering at Mutah University in Jordan. He was supposed to return there this summer to complete his studies. He was the eldest child, and his family had pinned high hopes on him. They had expected him to help support the family once he obtained his coveted degree. But instead of providing them with financial assistance, Khaled Mahamra, once the pride of his family, could be the reason why their home in Yatta will be demolished.” . . .*

*“Musa Mahamra, head of the Yatta village council, is also a member of the extended family. He told Al-Monitor that while there have been attempts to connect the family to past attacks against Israelis, ‘I can say with confidence that these two young men had no security record, nor did they have any political allegiance. What motivated them to launch their attack was the feeling that every opportunity had been closed to them and that there was no way out. This is a feeling shared by all young people of the same age who participated in terrorist attacks in the past.’” . . .*

*“Mahamra said that after things calmed down and the attacks stopped, ‘young people discovered that nothing had changed. There were no political, social or economic achievements from what happened, at least as far as they were concerned. There was nothing. Liberman’s appointment equaled — from their point of view — a declaration by Israel in favor of escalating the situation. We’ve all heard the statements that came out of Israel [before Liberman’s appointment]. I am sorry about the attack and the killing of innocents, but the younger generations, ages 16-20, which committed the attacks in the last wave of violence, acted out of desperation. That is what motivated the two members of the Mahamra family to act. The Hebron sector sacrificed half of the martyrs in the last outbreak of violence. There is an explanation for that. It didn’t just happen. Young people from Hebron run up against countless [IDF] checkpoints, attacks from settlers and clashes with the army. This is their way of rebelling against that.’” . . .*

See also [Link A - Only Solution to Palestinian Terrorism Is the End of the Occupation](#); [Link B - Tel Aviv mayor blames Israeli occupation for deadly cafe attack](#); [Link C - After Tel Aviv Attack, Palestinians Express Little Joy but Understand Gunmen’s Motive](#)

**3) [No Way Out](#), Dalia Hatuqa, FMEP, June 8, 2016**

“Prospects of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are in ‘serious danger,’ warned French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault last week in Paris, at a conference his country hosted to resuscitate the moribund peace process. Ayrault’s words echo those of many statesmen before him, who have used a well-tread lexicon. The two-state solution, we have been told, is perpetually on ‘life support,’ ‘slipping away forever,’ or on the edge of a ‘tipping point.’

“As the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip enters its 50th year, these warnings have shown themselves to be meaningless. Over these five decades, Israel has built settlements far and wide across the West Bank, creating facts on the ground and annexing large swathes of land before an agreement that draws permanent borders can be made with the Palestinians. Under such conditions, the peace process has proven that another temporary agreement is the only result it is capable of producing.” . . .

“The consequences of this failure have come to define the lives of many Palestinians, disgruntled at a US mediating role they see as biased, and at Israel’s relentless settlement enterprise dominating the West Bank’s landscape. Palestinians have also seen President Mahmoud Abbas – now 11 years into his 4-year-term – enact increasingly repressive policies. The PA security forces, which have grown in numbers and strength under US and EU training and funding, have cracked down on political dissenters, activists, university students, Hamas members, and those who use social media tools to vent about Abbas’ rule. Earlier this year, forces were even deployed when Palestinian teachers went on strike demanding better wages, and when people marched in droves against a national social security draft law.” . . .

**4) [Yet again the Jewish people face great danger and the world is silent](#), B. Michael, Haaretz, June 1, 2016**

“If the indifferent world persists in its silence, it will prove that it really is anti -Semitic, exactly as we've always been told. Yet again the Jewish people face great danger. Not the whole Jewish people. Just part of it. The part concentrated in the Middle East. And this time, it isn’t our enemies who are arising to smite us. This time, the ones arising come from within us. With our very own hands, we anointed the Huns who rule over us. A wild bunch, malicious, futile and unrestrained, leading their herd head-first into the wall.

“And the world is silent.” . . .

“And the world persists in its silence, as though it learned nothing and forgot nothing. It leaves the Jews of the Middle East to themselves. Let them do with those selves whatever they please. Yet it could have been so easy to save us. Demanding a visa applicable to every country in the universe, delicately hinting at cutbacks to stipends, here and there a little veto, practical thought on the model that brought South Africa back to the light... and the State of Israel would have been easily rescued from the morass into which it’s sinking like a submarine.

“But the world is silent.

“Start talking, cruel world! Because if you persist in your silence, you indifferent world, that will be categorical proof that you really are anti-Semitic, exactly as we’ve always been told.

“In summation, this is all I ask: Please translate my words into every language in the enlightened world and send them to your leaders. Experience has always taught that the world will persist in its silence until it’s too late, but at least, illusion is better than despair. And if I am accused of libeling the country, I will make the usual claims in my defense: 1. I spoke the truth. 2. The public has a deep interest in the matter (though it’s an ever-shrinking public).”

5) [Three Views: Is Israel Moving From a Right-Wing to a Fascist Government? \(Binyamin Netanyahu Did It Again\)](#), James Zogby, *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, June/July 2016, pp. 24-27

... “Equally important to note is that, far from being a strong leader, Netanyahu is weak and constantly fearful of others, both inside and outside of his government, who may challenge his authority. Alongside his core belief in maintaining Jewish control over Eretz Israel stands his concern with maintaining his personal power.

“These two goals define the man and explain his bullying and his maneuvers. His behavior has been shameful, but so, too, is the extent to which Israelis, Americans and others continue to enable his malevolent rule. As one Israeli military leader noted recently, Israeli society is on a slippery slope—becoming increasingly tolerant of racist violence. “Even though some of the most disturbingly bigoted personalities are in the Netanyahu government, the leader of the “centrist” opposition was desperate to join this coalition to protect it from Western critics. The Europeans continue to threaten sanctions in the face of ever-expanding settlement construction in occupied lands. On this issue, Netanyahu has been especially defiant. During his tenure in office, the settler population has increased by over 100,000. Despite this behavior, the Europeans have allowed themselves to be silenced and bullied by Netanyahu into inaction.

“As for the Americans, they have repeatedly expressed displeasure over Netanyahu’s settlement policies and his blatant interference in U.S. internal politics. Nevertheless the administration is now debating whether to reward his government with a 10-year aid package valued at \$35 billion—while Netanyahu, supported by allies in Congress, is brazenly holding out for \$45 to \$50 billion.

“And so, operating with virtually no restraints, Netanyahu continues to maneuver and to aggressively advance his hard-line agenda. He maintains his grip on power. Israeli society continues to become more extreme and intolerant. Palestinians are more despairing and desperate. And peace more remote.”

6) [49 years: The difficult truths of this conflict](#), Lara Friedan, *Americans for Peace Now*, June 1, 2016

“June 6, 2016 marks the 49<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Israel’s miraculous victory in the Six Day War.” . . .

“All of us at Americans for Peace Now (APN) look forward to a future in which June 6 is a day of true celebration. But tragically, that day has not yet come – and, indeed, seems further away than ever. Because June 6, 1967 also marked the beginning of Israel’s catastrophic policy of open-ended, ever-deepening military occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip.

“Over 49 years, that occupation has grown in the West Bank and East Jerusalem into a complex, far-reaching network of civilian and military modes of domination, control, and usurpation of territory and resources, increasingly interwoven with the economic, political, social, and national-security fabric of Israel proper. Territory that years ago should have served as a bargaining chip in a land-for-peace deal has been transformed into an incubator for malignant ideologies whose adherents rob Israel's citizens of the right to live in peace within recognized borders, with a recognized capital, enjoying international respect.” . . .

“Peace Now and Americans for Peace Now will never be resigned to this status quo. We will never allow Israel – its policies, its identity, its future – to be defined by its ultra-nationalists and religious fundamentalists. Just as we stand with Israel’s right to defend itself, as it did in the 1967 War, we stand with those, inside and outside Israel, who refuse to give in to the poisonous status quo that is the legacy of that 1967 war. This occupation can and must end; 49 years is too long, but it is not too late.”

See also Link E - [This regime cannot survive, half slave, half free](#)

**7) [Testimony of Matthew Duss, President, Foundation for Middle East Peace](#), before the Democratic Platform Committee on Israel/Palestine, June 9, 2016**

“Before I begin I would like to acknowledge the tragic and horrific terror attack that took place in Tel Aviv yesterday, which took the lives of four innocent civilians, and send my sympathies and solidarity to the victims and their families. As I know all of you do, I look forward to the day when this conflict is ended, and the people of Israel and Palestine live together in peace and security.” . . .

“The Israeli-Palestinian conflict not just threatens Israel’s security, but it is also a continuing source of regional resentment that hinders the U.S.’s relationships in the region, creating a deep well of resentment from which extremists draw freely and profitably. As General James Mattis, the former head of U.S. Central Command, put it in a 2013 interview, ‘I paid a military security price every day as a commander of CENTCOM because the Americans were seen as biased in support of Israel.’

“The creation of a Palestinian state in the territories occupied in 1967 has long been seen as a way to diminish these tensions. It is the best way for Israelis and Palestinians to achieve peace and security, and to control their destinies in their own homelands.

“Yet today, the two-state solution is in crisis. Many in the region and around the world no longer believe it possible, as indiscriminate attacks against Israel continue and Israel continues to expand illegal settlements and entrench its occupation in the West Bank. But, as U.S. officials have repeatedly warned, the status quo is not holding. It is deteriorating, with growing despair and violence leading to greater despair and violence. More than ever, strong American leadership is needed, leadership that considers equally the needs, aspirations and rights of both Israelis and Palestinians.” . . .

“This will be no small task, given recent positioning by both the Israelis and the Palestinians. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his allies seem to be preparing for a de facto one-state future, in which Israel controls in perpetuity the entire territory between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, and the Palestinians are at best provided limited “autonomy” within a disconnected series of cantons. It should be distressing to all of us that in the run-up to the March 2015 elections, Netanyahu made clear that a Palestinian state would not be born during his term as Prime Minister. Over the past year, U.S. officials have steadily escalated their warnings about Israeli policies in the West Bank.”

See also Link D - [Will the Democratic Platform Committee Go to War Over Israel?](#)

**Other articles of interest:**

**A) [Only Solution to Palestinian Terrorism Is the End of the Occupation, Haaretz Editorial, June 10, 2016](#)**

In the wake of the deadly Tel Aviv attack, ministers voice empty bravado and call for collective punishment, thereby just pushing more Palestinians to violence. It's time Israel learned the lesson: Terrorism will continue as long as the occupation does.

**B) [Tel Aviv mayor blames Israeli occupation for deadly cafe attack, MEE staff, Middle East Eye, June 9, 2016](#)**

Ron Huldai calls on Israel to show Palestinians they want a just peace agreement after 4 people killed when Palestinian gunmen opened fire.

**C) [After Tel Aviv Attack, Palestinians Express Little Joy but Understand Gunmen's Motive, Amira Hass, Haaretz, June 10, 2016](#)**

Every week, hundreds of Palestinians are exposed to Israeli gunfire and flee it in fear. In their view, what Israelis

experienced in this one attack is dwarfed by what they experience routinely.

- D) [Will the Democratic Platform Committee Go to War Over Israel?, Ali Gharib, The Nation, June 10, 2016](#)  
Clinton's and Sanders's appointees are sharply divided, so there's sure to be a fracas—one that represents growing divisions among Democrats.
- E) [This regime cannot survive, half slave, half free, Adam Keller, Jerusalem Post, June 1, 2016](#)  
Israelis who still adhere to such concepts as democracy, or human rights, or simply common decency, increasingly feel beleaguered and threatened – and not only left-wingers.
- F) [CMEP Bulletin - Annexation is Business as Usual – June 10, 2016](#)
- G) [Why Israel is blocking access to its archives, Al-Jazeera, June 9, 2016](#)  
Israel is concealing vital records to prevent darkest periods in its history from coming to light, academics say.
- H) [EU warns Israel: Policy of demolishing Palestinian homes in Area C will harm relations, Barak Ravid, Haaretz, May 31, 2016](#)  
Israeli official details tense and difficult meeting in which the EU expressed opposition to 'home demolition and forced evacuation of populations.
- I) [Why confederation with Palestine is suddenly a hot issue in Amman, Osama Al Sharif, May 31, 2016](#)  
Discussion of a possible Palestinian-Jordanian confederation is testing the public mood in Jordan and the West Bank as President Mahmoud Abbas' popularity dips further.
- J) ['Two countries, One homeland', Itay Blumental, YnetNews, June 2, 2016](#)  
A three year old peace organization called "two countries, one homeland" which is made up of both Israelis and Palestinians held its largest convocation in Tel Aviv on June 2; it announced its principals: two independent states based on the 1967 lines, economic cooperation, and a shared capital in Jerusalem.
- K) [Has Netanyahu's political credit expired?, Akiva Eldar, Al-Monitor, May 31, 2016](#)  
Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has lost political and personal credibility by appointing Avigdor Liberman as defense minister and with the state comptroller exposing his past financial dealings
- L) [The war of succession brewing in Palestine, Menachem Klein, +972 Blog, June 4, 2016](#)  
The head of the Palestinian security services is counting on Israeli support. Mohammed Dahlan is trying to rally backers in Egypt. From prison, Marwan Barghouti is writing plans for a nonviolent struggle to will the Palestinian public worldwide. The struggle over Abbas' succession signals a generational change among the Palestinian leadership.
- M) [Netanyahu Has No Reason to Rejoice: The Paris Summit Is Just the Beginning, Barak Ravid, Haaretz, June 4, 2016](#)  
Jerusalem was quick to take credit for the softening of the meeting's final statement. Not only are the French determined to push their initiative, however, but the U.S. may launch a move of their own - even before November.
- N) [Israel's Fight Against BDS, Bob Herbst, Huffington Post, June 2, 2016](#)  
After the American Studies Association voted to boycott Israeli academic institutions in 2013, and the Presbyterian Church and United Church of Christ voted to divest from companies that support the occupation in 2014 and 2015 respectively, the Israeli government and the American Jewish leadership has recently started to take the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions ("BDS") movement seriously.

**O) [Netanyahu's diplomatic nightmare, Ben Caspit, Al-MonitOr, June 6, 2016](#)**

The sharp U-turns being carried out these days by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his newbie Defense Minister Avigdor Liberman are overwrought, even for a cynical political system such as Israel's. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's sudden positive statements on the Arab Peace Initiative a reflection of his fears of a Palestinian statehood resolution at the United Nations?

**P) [Summing Up the Glories of the Israeli Occupation as We Enter Its 50th Year, Yitzhak Laor, June 6, 2016](#)**

This is what remains: hatred. And for that we thank everyone who was in favor of going into that war and who postponed the end. Now is the life after death, like vampires.

**Q) [Key Muslim and Christian Holy Sites Erased from "Old City" Map, IMEMCNews, June 13, 2016](#)**

The Israeli tourism ministry has published a map of the occupied Old City of al-Quds (Jerusalem), which omits significant Muslim and Christian holy sites, as well as entire neighborhoods, from the area. The so-called "Old City" map does not label the venerated 14-hectare compound that comprises al-Aqsa Mosque — Islam's third holiest site — and the Dome of the Rock, as "al-Haram al-Sharif," and simply refers to it by its Jewish name of the Temple Mount, Al Jazeera reported.